PURIM
THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Rabbi David Evan Markus (2018)

A Modern Esther Tribute
Purim & Women's History Month

Purim affirms Esther's stand against official silencing, abuse of power, misogyny and anti-Semitism. At first an outsider, Queen Esther used her insider power to reveal and thwart official hatred that threatened Jewish life and safety. We celebrate one woman's courageous cunning to right grievous wrongs within corrupt systems. The archetype of heroic woman standing against hatred continues to call out every society still wrestling with official misogyny, power abuses and silencing. For every official silencing and every threat to equality and freedom, may we all live the lesson of Esther and all who stand in her shoes: "Nevertheless, she persisted."

Esther 3:12b-14

The following orders [of Haman] were issued in the name of King Achashverosh, and sealed with the king's signet.

Couriers dispatched written instructions to all the king's provinces to destroy, massacre and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on a single day – the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar – and plunder their possessions. The text of the document was that a law be proclaimed in each province, publicly displayed to all peoples in their own languages, so that they might be ready for that day.

Esther 4:10-14

From the king's castle, Esther told the eunuch Hathach to tell her uncle Mordechai: All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, know that whoever, male or female, comes to the king's court without being called, the law puts that person to death unless the king hold outs the golden scepter. I have not been called to the king for thirty days.

When Mordechai heard Esther's words, he sent this reply: Do not think you can escape with your life in the palace more than all the Jews. If you stay silent now, maybe relief and deliverance may come to Jews in another place, but you and your father's house will be destroyed. Who knows: maybe you came into your power just for this moment.

Congressional Record
Feb. 7, 2017, S.852-S.855

[In 2017, the U.S. Senate debated President Donald Trump's nomination of Senator Jefferson Sessions to be Attorney General. During the debate, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts read this 1986 letter from Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., about Sessions, whom President Ronald Reagan had nominated for a judgeship.]

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my strong opposition to the nomination of Jefferson Sessions for a federal district judgeship for the Southern District of Alabama. My longstanding commitment, which I shared with my husband, Martin, to protect and enhance the rights of Black Americans, rights which include equal access to the democratic process, compels me to testify today. Civil rights leaders, including my husband..., have fought long and hard to achieve free and unfettered access to the ballot box. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens in the district he now seeks to serve as a federal judge. This simply cannot be allowed to happen: Mr. Sessions' conduct as U.S. Attorney, from his politically-motivated voting fraud prosecutions to his indifference toward criminal violations of civil rights laws, indicates that he lacks the temperament, fairness and judgment to be a federal judge....

Blacks still fall far short of having equal participation in the electoral process: Particularly in the South, efforts continue to be made to deny Blacks access to the polls, even where Blacks constitute the majority of the voters. It has been a long, uphill struggle to keep alive the vital legislation that protects the most fundamental right to vote. A person who has exhibited so much hostility to the enforcement of those laws –

The Presiding Officer [of the Senate interrupted, saying]: The Senator is reminded that it is a violation of Rule XIX of the Standing Rules of the Senate to impute to another Senator or to other Senators any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a Senator.

[Senator] Warren [said]: I don't think I quite understand. I am reading a letter from Coretta Scott King to the Judiciary Committee from 1986 that was admitted into the record. I am simply reading what she wrote about what the nomination of Jeff Sessions to be a Federal court judge meant and what it would mean in history for her....

The Presiding Officer [interrupted and called on the majority leader, Senator McConnell, who said]: The Senator [from Massachusetts has impugned the motives and conduct of our colleague from Alabama, as warned by the Chair. Senator Warren said Senator Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by Black citizens. I call the Senator to order under the provisions of Rule XIX.

The Presiding Officer [called on] the Senator from Massachusetts, Ms. Warren, [who said]: Mr. President, I am surprised that the words of Coretta Scott King are not suitable for debate in the United States Senate. I ask leave of the Senate to continue my remarks.

The Presiding Officer [asked]: Is there objection?

[Senator] McConnell [said]: I object.

The Presiding Officer [said]: Objection is heard. The senator [from Massachusetts] will take her seat. [He called on] the Senate majority leader, Mr. McConnell, [who said]: Here is what transpired. Senator Warren was giving a lengthy speech. She had appeared to violate the rule. She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted.

Rabbi David Evan Markus (2018)

A Modern Esther Tribute
Purim & Women's History Month

Purim affirms Esther's stand against official silencing, abuse of power, misogyny and anti-Semitism. At first an outsider, Queen Esther used her insider power to reveal and thwart official hatred that threatened Jewish life and safety. We celebrate one woman's courageous cunning to right grievous wrongs within corrupt systems. The archetype of heroic woman standing against hatred continues to call out every society still wrestling with official misogyny, power abuses and silencing. For every official silencing and every threat to equality and freedom, may we all live the lesson of Esther and all who stand in her shoes: "Nevertheless, she persisted."

Esther 3:12b-14

The following orders [of Haman] were issued in the name of King Achashverosh, and sealed with the king's signet.

Couriers dispatched written instructions to all the king's provinces to destroy, massacre and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on a single day – the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar – and plunder their possessions. The text of the document was that a law be proclaimed in each province, publicly displayed to all peoples in their own languages, so that they might be ready for that day.

Esther 4:10-14

From the king's castle, Esther told the eunuch Hathach to tell her uncle Mordechai: All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, know that whoever, male or female, comes to the king's court without being called, the law puts that person to death unless the king hold outs the golden scepter. I have not been called to the king for thirty days.

When Mordechai heard Esther's words, he sent this reply: Do not think you can escape with your life in the palace more than all the Jews. If you stay silent now, maybe relief and deliverance may come to Jews in another place, but you and your father's house will be destroyed. Who knows: maybe you came into your power just for this moment.

Congressional Record
Feb. 7, 2017, S.852-S.855

[In 2017, the U.S. Senate debated President Donald Trump's nomination of Senator Jefferson Sessions to be Attorney General. During the debate, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts read this 1986 letter from Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., about Sessions, whom President Ronald Reagan had nominated for a judgeship.]

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my strong opposition to the nomination of Jefferson Sessions for a federal district judgeship for the Southern District of Alabama. My longstanding commitment, which I shared with my husband, Martin, to protect and enhance the rights of Black Americans, rights which include equal access to the democratic process, compels me to testify today. Civil rights leaders, including my husband…, have fought long and hard to achieve free and unfettered access to the ballot box. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens in the district he now seeks to serve as a federal judge. This simply cannot be allowed to happen. Mr. Sessions' conduct as U.S. Attorney, from his politically-motivated voting fraud prosecutions to his indifference toward criminal violations of civil rights laws, indicates that he lacks the temperament, fairness and judgment to be a federal judge….

Blacks still fall far short of having equal participation in the electoral process. Particularly in the South, efforts continue to be made to deny Blacks access to the polls, even where Blacks constitute the majority of the voters. It has been a long, uphill struggle to keep alive the vital legislation that protects the most fundamental right to vote. A person who has exhibited so much hostility to the enforcement of those laws –

The Presiding Officer [of the Senate interrupted, saying]: The Senator is reminded that it is a violation of Rule XIX of the Standing Rules of the Senate to impute to another Senator or to other Senators any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a Senator.

[Senator] Warren [said]: I don't think I quite understand. I am reading a letter from Coretta Scott King to the Judiciary Committee from 1986 that was admitted into the record. I am simply reading what she wrote about what the nomination of Jeff Sessions to be a Federal court judge meant and what it would mean in history for her….

The Presiding Officer [interrupted and called on the majority leader, Senator McConnell, who said]: The Senator [from Massachusetts has impugned the motives and conduct of our colleague from Alabama, as warned by the Chair. Senator Warren said Senator Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by Black citizens. I call the Senator to order under the provisions of Rule XIX.

The Presiding Officer [called on] the Senator from Massachusetts, Ms. Warren, [who said]: Mr. President, I am surprised that the words of Coretta Scott King are not suitable for debate in the United States Senate. I ask leave of the Senate to continue my remarks.

The Presiding Officer [asked]: Is there objection?

[Senator] McConnell [said]: I object.

The Presiding Officer [said]: Objection is heard. The senator [from Massachusetts] will take her seat. [He called on] the Senate majority leader, Mr. McConnell, [who said]: Here is what transpired. Senator Warren was giving a lengthy speech. She had appeared to violate the rule. She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted.